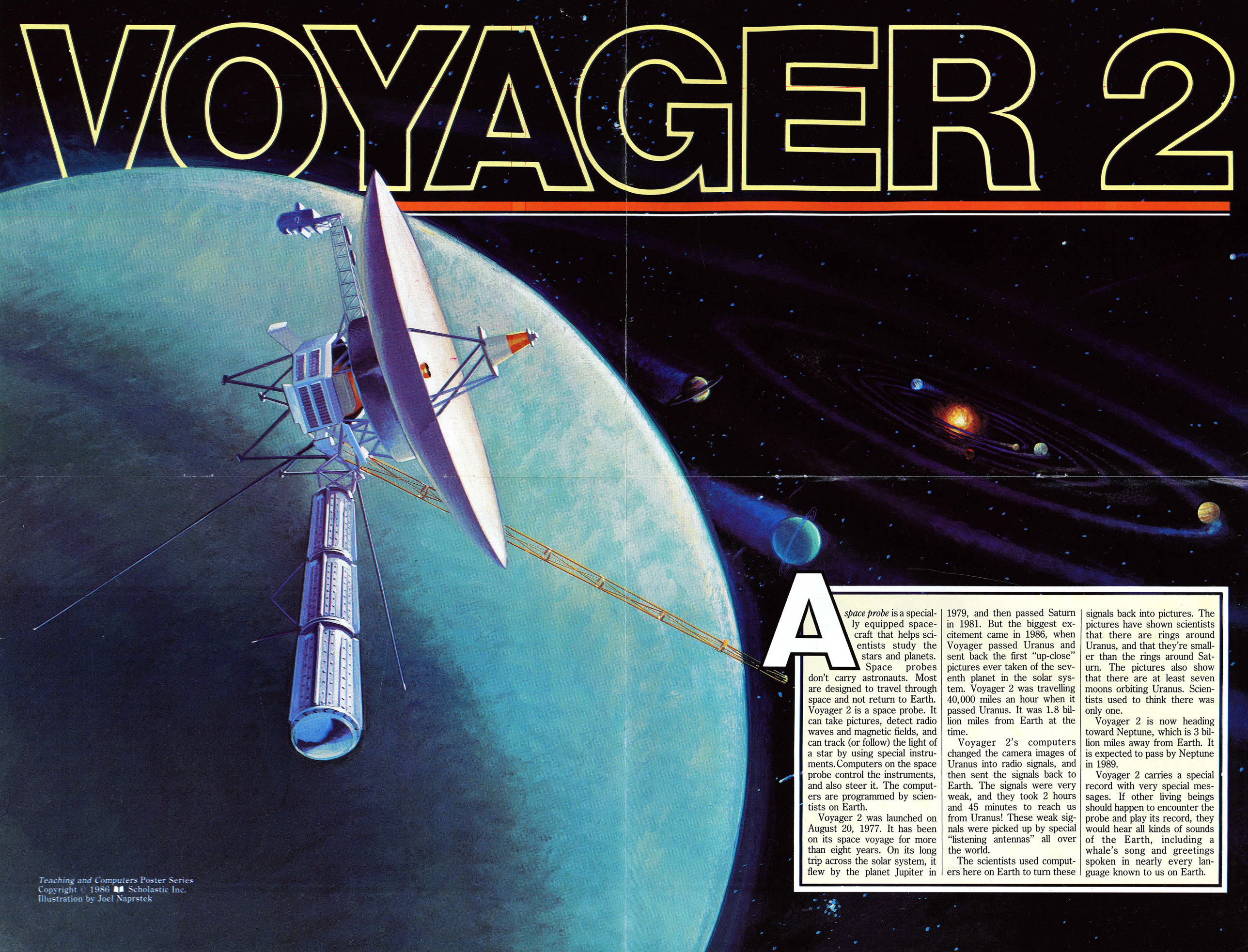
VOYAGER 2



A *space probe* is a specially equipped spacecraft that helps scientists study the stars and planets. Space probes don't carry astronauts. Most are designed to travel through space and not return to Earth. Voyager 2 is a space probe. It can take pictures, detect radio waves and magnetic fields, and can track (or follow) the light of a star by using special instruments. Computers on the space probe control the instruments, and also steer it. The computers are programmed by scientists on Earth.

Voyager 2 was launched on August 20, 1977. It has been on its space voyage for more than eight years. On its long trip across the solar system, it flew by the planet Jupiter in 1979, and then passed Saturn in 1981. But the biggest excitement came in 1986, when Voyager passed Uranus and sent back the first "up-close" pictures ever taken of the seventh planet in the solar system. Voyager 2 was travelling 40,000 miles an hour when it passed Uranus. It was 1.8 billion miles from Earth at the time.

Voyager 2's computers changed the camera images of Uranus into radio signals, and then sent the signals back to Earth. The signals were very weak, and they took 2 hours and 45 minutes to reach us from Uranus! These weak signals were picked up by special "listening antennas" all over the world.

The scientists used computers here on Earth to turn these signals back into pictures. The pictures have shown scientists that there are rings around Uranus, and that they're smaller than the rings around Saturn. The pictures also show that there are at least seven moons orbiting Uranus. Scientists used to think there was only one.

Voyager 2 is now heading toward Neptune, which is 3 billion miles away from Earth. It is expected to pass by Neptune in 1989.

Voyager 2 carries a special record with very special messages. If other living beings should happen to encounter the probe and play its record, they would hear all kinds of sounds of the Earth, including a whale's song and greetings spoken in nearly every language known to us on Earth.

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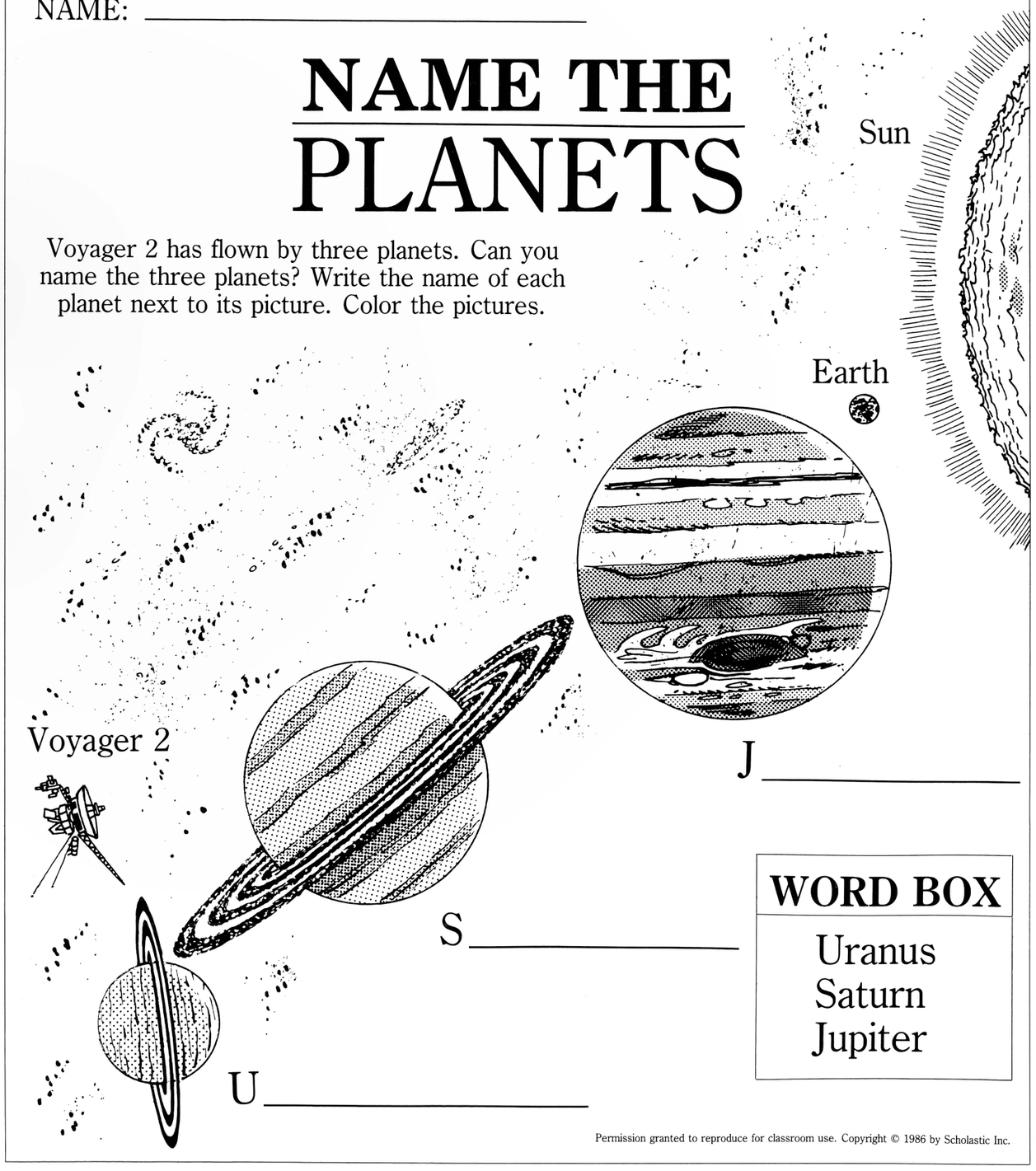
NAME THE PLANETS

Voyager 2 has flown by three planets. Can you name the three planets? Write the name of each planet next to its picture. Color the pictures.



J _____

S _____

U _____

WORD BOX

Uranus
Saturn
Jupiter

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Ron Zalme

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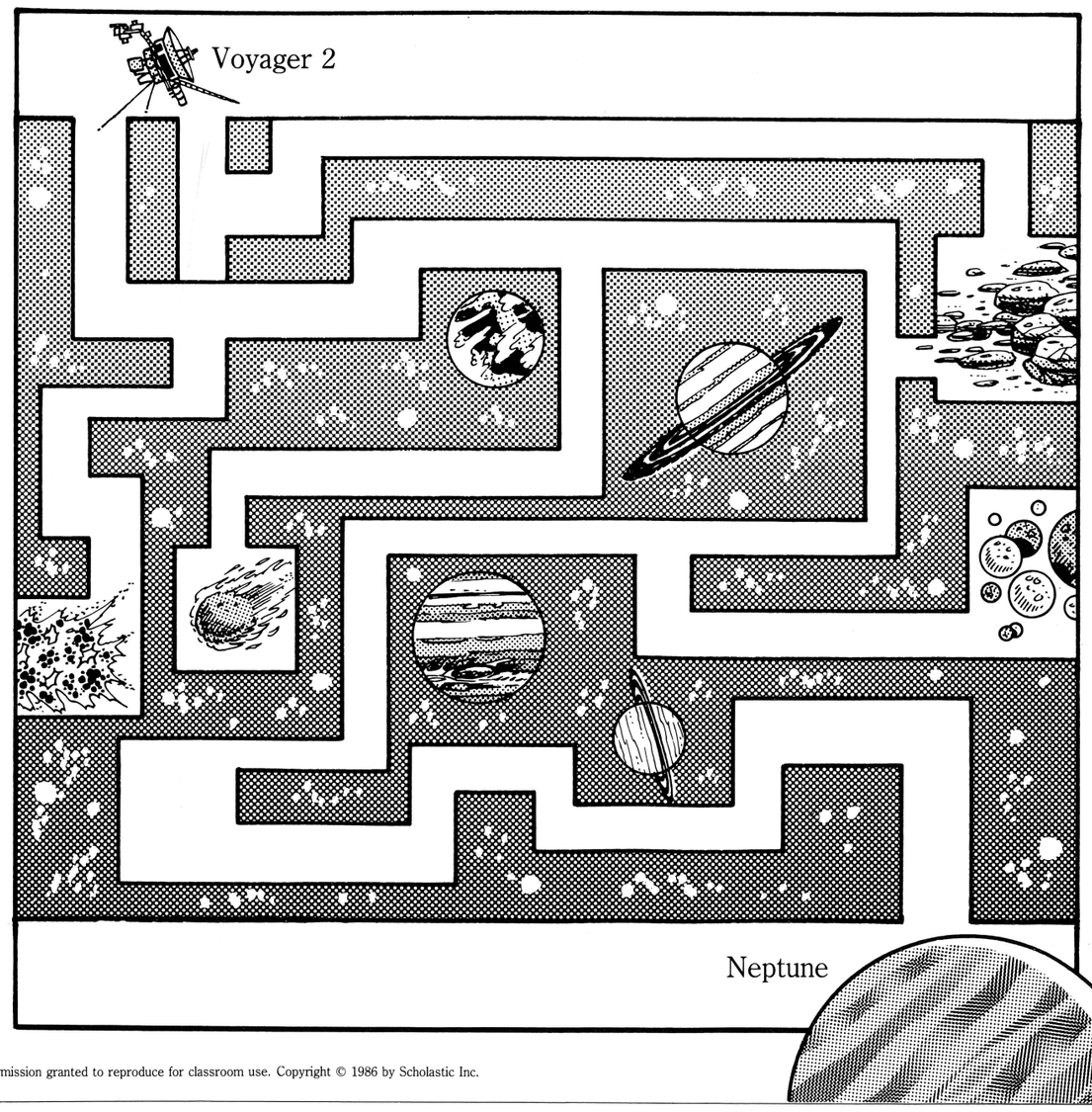
FIND NEPTUNE

Voyager 2 has a long way to go to reach Neptune. Pretend you run the computers on Voyager 2. Help it get through this maze and reach Neptune.



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Directions: Pretend you are a science news reporter. Complete the headline and write a newspaper story about a space probe and what it discovered. The probe can be real or make-believe. Don't forget to write a caption for the picture and put in your byline (your name!).

DAILY NEWSPAPER

July 12, 1989 **$1.00**

Space Probe Discovers _____

By _____
(your name)

PASADENA, CA–

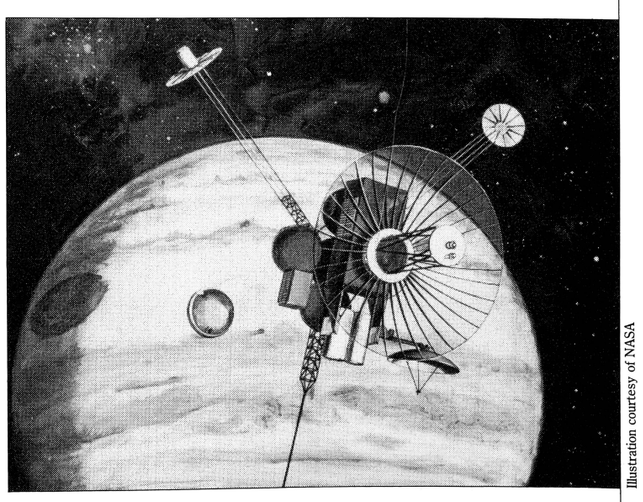

Illustration courtesy of NASA

Caption: _____

_____

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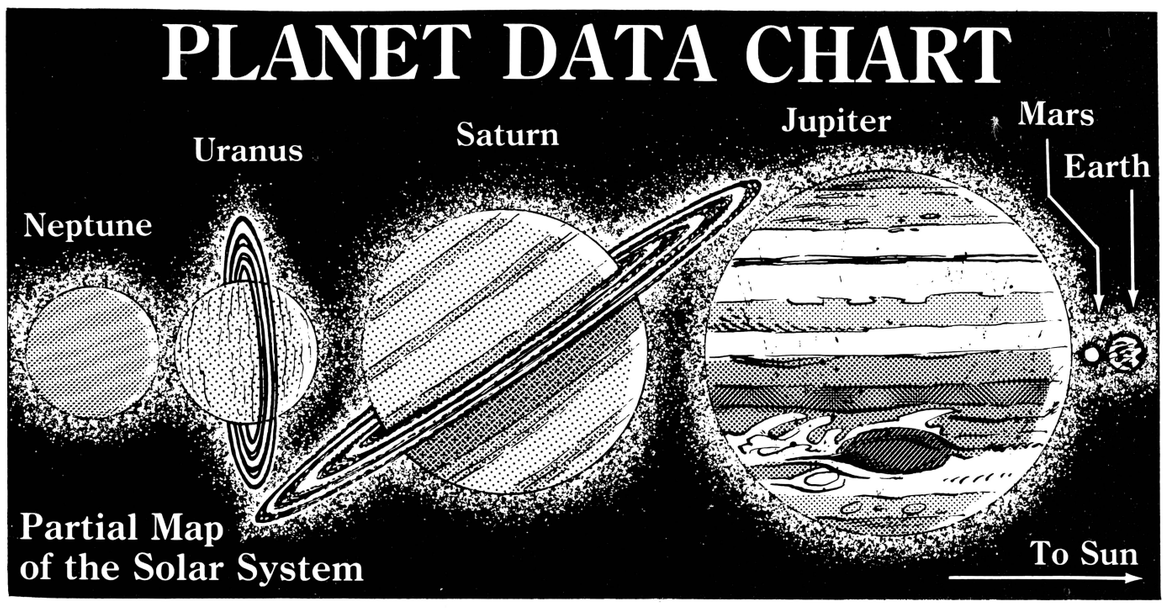

So far, Voyager II has flown by three planets: Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus. It will fly by Neptune in 1989. To date, what do we know about these four planets? Use current references to fill in the data chart below.

JUPITER
Voyager's Arrival Date: _____
Diameter of Planet: _____
Temperature: _____
Atmosphere: _____
Number of Moons: _____
Other Observations: _____
_____

URANUS
Voyager's Arrival Date: _____
Diameter of Planet: _____
Temperature: _____
Atmosphere: _____
Number of Moons: _____
Other Observations: _____
_____

SATURN
Voyager's Arrival Date: _____
Diameter of Planet: _____
Temperature: _____
Atmosphere: _____
Number of Moons: _____
Other Observations: _____
_____

NEPTUNE
Voyager's Arrival Date: _____
Diameter of Planet: _____
Temperature: _____
Atmosphere: _____
Number of Moons: _____
Other Observations: _____
_____

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